



Skills Transfer

Food Service Occupations

January 2026

The economy and workforce are constantly evolving due to changes in technology, how and where work is done, and the needs of consumers. Jobs that were in-demand in the past may not be in-demand today, or in the future. Many workers in those jobs will have to find new avenues of employment. This brief explores some of the *Food Service* occupations that are projected to decline in employment from 2022-2032, and how workers in those occupations may transfer their skills to new, in-demand occupations.

Cooks, Fast Food and *Food Preparation Workers* are two entry level food service occupations projected to decrease in employment from 2022-2032. *Cooks, Fast Food* are projected to decline 11.8%, a loss of over 5,000 jobs, in the 10-year period; while *Food Preparation Workers* are projected to decline by 1.6%, or 242 jobs. Several higher paying, in-demand jobs share similar skills with these occupations, and are available with little additional training.

STARTING OCCUPATIONS

Cooks, Fast Food (\$30,070*)
Food Preparation Workers (\$32,550*)

RELATED JOBS

First-Line Supervisors of Food
Preparation & Serving Workers
(\$42,640*)

Bakers
(\$34,820*)

Cooks, Restaurant
(\$35,730*)

ONLINE JOB POSTINGS DEC. 2024 - NOV. 2025 IN MISSOURI

5,840

1,480

3,340

PROJECTED ANNUAL OPENINGS 2022-2032**

3,518

636

6,070

SKILLS IN COMMON

Food Safety & Sanitation, Restaurant Operation, Food Preparation, Cooking

ADDITIONAL SKILLS REQUESTED

Retail Operations, Restaurant
Management, Merchandising,
Cash Handling

Baking, Cake Decorating,
Merchandising

Food Services, Hazard Analysis
and Critical Control Points
(HACCP)

REQUESTED EDUCATION/CERTIFICATION

ServSafe Certification, Food
Handler's Card, Food Safety
Certification

Food Handler's Card, ServSafe
Certification

ServSafe Certification, Food
Handler's Card

TIME TO TRANSITION

Little-to-some additional
preparation needed

Little-to-no additional
preparation needed

Little-to-no additional
preparation needed

* Average wage, BLS 2024 Occupational Employment Statistics

**MERIC long-term employment projections, openings are from new job growth and the need for replacement workers

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